

February 28, 2023

Written testimony submitted to the Connecticut General Assembly **H.B. 6659- “*An act concerning the state budget for the biennium ending June 30, 2025*”**

Dear distinguished members of the Appropriations Committee, Chairs Osten and Walker, Vice Chairs Exum and Hartley and Ranking Members Berthel and Nuccio:

My name is Rev. Larissa Forsythe. I live in Glastonbury, Connecticut, and am the Associate Minister of the Congregational Church in South Glastonbury, a founding member of the Greater Hartford Interfaith Action Alliance, or GHIAA. GHIAA is a network of over 50 diverse congregations across the theological spectrum working together for justice.

I am writing in support of a \$20 million dollar allocation over 2 years to community violence reduction efforts across the state. Although this amount was not specified in the Governor’s budget, it is necessary and will save lives.

Street outreach programs such as Hartford Communities That Care, Mothers United Against Violence, and Compass Youth Collaborative are associated with up to 37 percent reductions in gun injuries. However, funding for gun violence intervention and prevention in the state of Connecticut is not consistent enough to sustain these organizations and move the needle to end gun violence.

Therefore, GHIAA is seeking funding from the state to support the work gun violence prevention and intervention organizations who are doing on the ground, on the front lines.

The Connecticut Commission on Community Gun Violence Intervention and Prevention, launched in August of this year through the Department

of Public Health, was tasked to distribute 2 million dollars to prevention and intervention organizations across the state. This is not enough.

The Commission is made up of experts in their fields, appointed to serve by legislation passed in the 2022 legislative session. These experts include trauma surgeons, street-level intervention specialists, public health professionals, and those who have lost loved ones to violence. **In their report, submitted to the legislature in January of this year, the Commission recommended that funding be allocated at the \$20 million dollar level** over 3 years to provide continuity of resources and support.

I am grateful for Connecticut's commitment to passing legislation to prevent tragedies like Sandy Hook. I'm now asking our state to stand up for our residents in urban communities who experience gun violence at alarming rates. We need to invest in gun violence prevention programs with proven track records like the ones listed above.

My faith teaches me that all people are beloved by God. We cannot stand idly by while our neighbors experience violence. Slapping on a 2 million dollar bandaid isn't enough. I implore you to honor the Connecticut Commission on Community Gun Violence Intervention and Prevention's recommendation and allocate \$20 million over two years toward the prevention of gun violence in our urban communities.

Thank you for your leadership in this crucial issue.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Larissa Forsythe", written in a cursive style.

Rev. Larissa Forsythe,  
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Glastonbury, CT 06033